

12/14/2009 This Week in Congress

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December 14, 2009

Dear Friend,

Welcome to "This Week in Congress."

'No' to Spending Increase

Despite my opposition, the House of Representatives passed a massive \$1.1 trillion spending bill on Thursday. The legislation combined six separate spending bills that will fund much of the federal government in 2010. Agencies and programs in those six spending bills received a total of \$49.7 billion more than last year, which is an increase of more than 12 percent. This is wrong. At a time in which our country has a \$1.4 trillion deficit, Congress should reduce spending. Out-of-control government spending must be stopped to prevent us from bankrupting our country and burdening future generations with insurmountable debt. The spending bill awaits the President's signature after it was passed Sunday by the Senate. [Click here to watch a speech I gave about the need to cut spending.](#)

So-Called Health Care 'Compromise' is Irresponsible

The Senate has been debating the future of health care in our country since Speaker Nancy Pelosi's health care reform bill passed the House of Representatives on November 7th. This week, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid announced a "compromise," that includes an option for uninsured individuals between the ages of 55 and 64 to purchase health coverage under Medicare. This so-called "compromise" would be a dramatic step toward a single-payer, one-size-fits-all, government-run health care system for our country. I am strongly opposed to this idea.

The plan touted by the Majority Leader fails to consider the significant consequences that such a dramatic expansion of Medicare will have on our health care system. Under this "compromise," near-seniors, especially those with serious health problems, will flock to Medicare for health coverage, causing a dramatic expansion in the program. Expanding Medicare in this manner will cause premium costs to skyrocket for all beneficiaries and force the government to turn to the taxpayer for funding help. Additionally, it is presumed that this expanded program would pay hospitals, doctors and nurses Medicare rates, which currently fail to cover all medical costs. The result could be that Kansas hospitals would be forced to close their doors and doctors might have to close their practices. [Click here to read more.](#)

President's Efforts Would Damage Economy

Since coming to office, the President has pursued an environmental strategy that seeks to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to the detriment of the U.S. economy. I spoke to my colleagues in the House of Representatives this week about the President's latest effort to accomplish his goal through an international climate change treaty being negotiated in Copenhagen, Denmark.

At the same time as negotiators were in Copenhagen this week, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) ruled that carbon dioxide and five other greenhouse gases are a danger to public health and the environment. This decision means the EPA can impose greenhouse gas regulation without congressional action. This threat is no reason to agree to an international treaty or to pass cap and trade. To the contrary, cap and trade must be defeated in the Senate; the President should not enter into any agreement that would damage the U.S. economy; and the EPA's faulty ruling must be corrected.

At a time when so many Americans are without work, the President and Congress need to focus on ways to create jobs and grow the economy. A cap and trade bill, EPA regulations or an international treaty, all of which are on the President's holiday wish list, would be devastating to the U.S. economy. That's a Christmas gift no American wants. [Click here to watch my remarks.](#)

Working to Prevent Government Funded Abortions in Health Care Reform

Government funding of abortions is a clear violation of many Americans' deeply held beliefs, including my own. During debate on health care reform legislation in the House of Representatives last month, 239 representatives and I voted for the Stupak/Pitts Amendment to maintain the current policy of preventing federal funding for abortion and for health benefit packages that include abortion. With this vote, the House sent a clear message that health care reform should not include the government funding of abortions.

This week, I strongly encouraged Speaker Nancy Pelosi to prevent the government funding of abortions in health care

reform legislation. Thirty-nine of my House colleagues joined me in signing my letter to Speaker Pelosi insisting that she keep the exact language of the Stupak/Pitts Amendment in any final version of health care reform legislation. Inclusion of this language in any final bill is even more crucial after the Senate defeated an attempt on Tuesday to include the Stupak/Pitts language in the Senate's health care reform legislation. [Click here to read my letter to Speaker Pelosi.](#)

Financial Regulation Bill Continues Bailout Authority

Kansans are fed up with bailouts, irresponsible government spending and huge debts. On Friday, I opposed passage of a financial regulation bill that created a permanent bailout authority similar to the Troubled Asset Relief Program (TARP). This legislation did nothing to address the crunch on credit that many small businesses and families are experiencing.

Before the final vote on the financial regulation bill Friday, I voted for an amendment that would have ended TARP and required TARP funds be used to pay down the national debt. Unfortunately, this amendment failed to pass. [Click here to read more about my efforts to end TARP.](#) [Click here to watch my speech in opposition to the financial regulation bill.](#)

Supporting the Use of Christmas Symbols and Traditions

Every year it seems there is another news story about efforts by some to restrict the First Amendment right of Americans to express their religious beliefs at Christmas. This week, I sponsored legislation that recognizes the importance of Christmas symbols and traditions and expresses support for their use for those who celebrate the holiday. The legislation also expresses disapproval of attempts to ban references to Christmas. I believe public displays of religion should be welcomed in our society and have supported legislation, like this, that protects traditional values and historic traditions.

Saluting Smith Center's Commitment to Football and Rural Values

I spoke to the House of Representatives this week about the community of Smith Center. This town in Smith County has been in the news recently thanks to their high school football team's nationally recognized winning streak, which came to an end on November 28th when Centralia High School defeated Smith Center High School in the 2-1A State Football Championship. The loss ended a best-in-the-nation 79-game winning streak.

While the winning streak was impressive, the most remarkable thing about the team and its supporters was the grace by which they accepted the streak's ending. The values of hard work, sacrifice and humility are instilled in the students of Smith Center. These values are similarly taught in communities throughout rural America. I am thankful to the team, school and community for being such great ambassadors for our rural way of life. [Click here to watch my remarks.](#)

Unemployment Resources Available for Kansans

Times are tough for many Kansans. Unemployment in our state has risen to nearly 7%, prompting many to contact my office for where to find help. My office is here to support Kansans by providing resources and tools that are available to assist individuals, families and businesses. Information on unemployment assistance, employment training, federal job resources, eligibility for medical assistance programs, loan programs and more is available on my Web site. [Click here to access this information.](#)

From Washington to Home: Big First Listening Tour Continues

I continued my Big First Listening Tour this week with a town hall meeting in Dickinson County. I spoke to those in attendance in Chapman about health care reform, cap and trade and the disastrous increase in government spending. These conversations give me direction in Washington, D.C. [Click here to view photos from my town hall meeting in Dickinson County.](#)

The remaining town hall meetings of my listening tour, "From Washington to Home," are now scheduled. Next week, I will be in Greeley and Wichita Counties. I will conclude this year's listening tour in Home with my Marshall County tour stop on Tuesday, December 29. [Click here to view the remaining listening tour schedule and to see where I have already stopped this year.](#)

Tuesday, December 22, 2009

Greeley County Tour Stop, Tribune

Time: 10:30 to 11:30 AM CST (9:30 to 10:30 AM MST)

Location: Senior Center

Address: 410 Broadway

Wichita County Tour Stop, Leoti

Time: Noon to 1:00 PM

Location: Atkinson Senior Center

Address: 110 S. Indian Road

In the Office

Kansas State Forester Larry Biles of Manhattan was in with the Kansas Forest Service to tell me about forest service projects and to discuss concerns with the proposed Clean Water Restoration Act and cap and trade legislation. Joan Vitt and Susan Amick of Parsons were in with AFIX Technologies to talk about their work with Kansas law enforcement. Sunee Mickle of Lawrence stopped by to visit.

Randall O'Donnell, Genny Nicholas and Dallas Polen of Kansas City were in with Children's Mercy Hospital to discuss Medicaid and children's access to health care. Verlean Brown of Wichita and Bob Thesman of Shawnee were in with the Kansas National Education Association to talk about issues affecting Kansas public schools. Mike Scanlon and Laura McConwell of Mission, Jeff Meyers of Shawnee, Phil Lammers of Merriam, Dave Anderson of De Soto, Ed Peterson of Fairway and Bernice Duletski of Olathe were in to discuss future transit plans for Johnson County.

Dr. Brad Stuewe and Troy Vancil of Salina were in with Friends of the River to show me a presentation on future plans for the Smoky Hill River in Salina. Members of the Kansas Credit Union Association were in to talk about the financial regulatory overhaul bill being debated in the House of Representatives. In with the group were Larry Damm, Stephanie Farber, Marla Marsh and Mike Welli of Wichita; Jennifer Kirmse of Topeka; and Raymond Stroud of Dodge City.

Very truly yours,

Jerry